

refused to give him up, and hid him from the King's officers, pleading their private right to the ransom. It is liard not to sympathise with them, for they had lived long years in the expectation of making their fortunes by the hostage, who by the irony of fate was to prove the cause of their undoing. On their refusal to surrender him, Lord Latimer and Sir^ Ralph Ferrers lodged in the Marshal's Court a claim on the prisoner in their own right.<sup>1</sup> It seems highly probable that they were men of straw put up by the government, or by John of Gaunt, who was personally interested in the success of the war against Castile, to whose throne he laid claim by right of marriage. Believing their plea to be a mere ruse to take the prisoner from them, Haule and Slmkell would not bring him into court. The Parliament of October 1377 took up the case and ordered them to produce him. In the face of the assembled Houses the two knights positively refused to obey, and were committed to the Tower in consequence by order of the whole Parliament.<sup>2</sup>

It is at this point in the story that an impartial judgment as to the rights and wrongs of the case may be best formed. The events that followed threw such a flood of religious and party prejudice into the eyes of contemporaries, that to one part of the nation Shakell and Haule ever afterwards appeared as contumacious rebels against the Crown, to the other part as victims of the ambition and cruelty of John of Gaunt, The unbiassed historian will perceive that, though they had a considerable grievance, the wrong had been done them by the State as a whole and not by the Duke of Lancaster alone. It was his enemies who began the persecution of the knights. The King's counsellors, who laid claim to the prisoner in August 1377,<sup>3</sup> in the same month drove the Duke into retirement from public life, The Lords and Commons who imprisoned the knights in the following October were opposed to the House of Lancaster, and succeeded in reviving the policy of the Good Parliament. It was, no doubt, intended to use the hostage for the benefit of the Duke's claim on the throne of

\* <sup>1</sup> *Rot. Parl.*, iii. 10 ; *English CTvromcte* (Camden, 1865), 1.

\* *Rot. Parl.*, iii. 10 and 386.

\* The document 'Super FimMici& Comiti\$ 4e Pene/  
August 4, 1377,